

Overseas Press Club Bulletin

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U.S. Newsmen Find Covering the Middle East "Ain't Easy!"



HONORING UPI'S 75th ANNIVERSARY . . . Jack Wang, New York bureau manager, Taiwan's Central News Agency, presents engraved silver plate to UPI president Roderick W. Beaton, inscribed by Dr. Ma Hsin-yeh, chairman, and Pan Huan-kun, president of the agency. Witnesses (l to r): William E. Geissler, Media News Corp. director; **Albert E. Kaff**, UPI VP for Asia and an OPC governor; and Claude Hippeau, UPI international VP.

. . . and Covering China "Ditto"

BEIJING—Takashi Oka, of the *Christian Science Monitor*, was elected chairman of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Beijing, succeeding Harald Munthe-Kaas of Norwegian Broadcasting, the club's first chairman.

The club was established just over a year ago, and 75 of the 96 foreign journalists accredited in China are now members.

At the club's annual meeting, June 22nd, an overflow crowd of members lunched on Continental cuisine in the Monterey Room of the Jianguo Hotel, a newly-opened clone of the Palo Alto, California, Holiday Inn and a continuing source of wonder to longtime residents of Beijing.

Also elected to the club committee were Charles-Antoine de Nerciat (Agence France-Presse), vice chairman; Stephen Jessel (BBC), secretary; Jurgen Siemund (ADN, German Democratic Republic),

treasurer, and committee members, Graham Earnshaw (*Daily Telegraph*), Sunil Roy (Press Trust of India), Takanori Aeba (NHK), Michael Parks (*Los Angeles Times*) and Agneta Engqvist (*Swedish Business Weekly*).

The chief problem facing the club, said the outgoing chairman, is the refusal of the Chinese government to recognize the organization as anything more than a "social group" for the entertainment of foreign journalists. Though the club has organized a number of seminars and luncheons with foreign speakers, Chinese guests have consistently declined invitations to speak. Also, the Foreign Ministry Information Department, the journalists' channel to the government, will not deal with officers representing the club. Other foreign groups, like the American Chamber of

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Five American journalists who have covered the Middle East took part in an OPC Shoptalk seminar June 15, one week after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Participants were **John Kifner** of *The New York Times*, **Tom Cheatham** of NBC News, **Tom Lippman** of the *Washington Post*, **Frank Crepeau** of The Associated Press and **Alan Alter** of United Press International, the moderator of the event.

OPC President **Anita Diamant** welcomed the full-house audience, while Program Committee Co-chairmen **Gloria Zukerman** and **George Krinsky** introduced the panel.

Here are excerpts from the 90-minute discussion on Mideast press coverage:

Kifner: . . . The logistics in all the Arab world are just awful. It's just impossible to get the smallest thing done, telephone calls, appointments, anything just takes agonizing hours or days. Problems of getting visas to get into most of these countries. You can't travel about freely. It's a huge production, so it's maybe one trip a year, two trips a year to Saudi Arabia, usually in conjunction with some grandiose fete or another. To sum it up, almost all the places you deal with are closed societies, because they are the product of centuries of wars and conspiracies. Information is a valuable weapon, and because of the sort of alienation fear that they feel of the western world, and because we are as strange to them as they are to us, the

(Continued on page 2)

To Our Membership

The Chemists' Club has finally made the decision to abandon the plan to institute credit through Master Card and Visa. Many members of the clubs using the facilities of the Chemists' Club (including their own membership) expressed dissatisfaction with the credit plan, and consequently we will continue to use our own assigned credit numbers for charges as we have before.

We do urge our members to continue to pay their bills promptly, since the OPC is liable to the Chemists' Club for all our members' indebtedness.

Anita Diamant
President

NEWSMEN IN MIDDLE EAST

(Continued from p. 1)

idea of a free press is as strange . . . some of the states are not even police states, they are gangster states. So you are dealing with another level of rigidity, and extreme difficulty in getting anything that's true.

Cheatham: . . . When you are based in Tel Aviv, your problem is not access to the country but access to the story . . . what you are seeing on your television sets these days from Lebanon is only what the Israeli authorities want you to see. We are now restricted to guided tours into Tyre and Sidon. . . . So we really don't know what's going on in many parts of Lebanon occupied by the Israelis. . . . What we have lacked throughout this story is the human element in terms of the hundreds, thousands of people that were left homeless, killed, wounded.

So, I guess to sum up, in normal times in Israel, access can be a problem. In a situation like this it is a very major problem, and that is something that you should be aware of.

Lippman: . . . If you go back and read Edward Said's book, "Covering Islam," which was an exaggerated and thinly made indictment of all of us, he did make the one overriding valid point which is the collective ignorance that we as a society, as a people, and, certainly many of us journalists as a group, have about the Islamic world in general, and the Islamic religion in particular. . . . The environment in which you (are) functioning (is) one that cannot be separated from its own history and culture.

I, for example, don't think the war between Iran and Iraq can be fully understood outside the context of a historic thousand-year-long struggle between Arab and Persian and between Sunni Moslem and Shiite Moslem. If you have to start from scratch on all that, you are laboring under an unnecessary handicap. . . . There are about 800 million Moslems in the world, and only about 120 to 130 million of them are Arabs. The rest are Africans, Asians, Arians — people of one kind or another in Turkey and Iran. And there is a tremendous diversity of political history, colonial experience, geography, economic situation in those countries that makes it very difficult to generalize about them. . . . It's just a situation where the last thing you do before you go to bed at night and the first thing you do when you get up in the morning is, turn the radio on and make sure all your governments are still in power.

Crepeau: . . . We are dealing with an area that is very emotionally charged. On any side of any issue in the Middle East, you have arguments on every side of every question. Where else would you have an argument about what the capital of Israel is? What is the PLO doing in Lebanon anyway?

It places a special responsibility on correspondents to try to make sense of this. You've got some idea of the difficulties covering the Arab world. There are some difficulties covering Israel. Sometimes it's too much information. It's a question of sorting it out. But at least you are working in a country that has a functioning parliament. There is an opportunity, a forum for dissent, opposition to be heard. And it is different, and in some ways much easier. But it is also very difficult. I think the American press does a good job within its limitations. People try to be fair and accurate. But just about anything you report leaves you wide open to charges from the other side of being wrong or misconstruing the whole thing.

Alter: . . . First of all, let's address the issue of language and whether correspondents should know the language; how much that helps. . . . Some news organizations stress that. Others see no importance in it at all. What's your feeling about the importance of it?

Kifner: . . . In six months, in a language like Arabic, you are not going to become native or conversant in it. All you can hope to do is to have enough of a beginning that you have a base to work with when you get there: that you can maybe find your way through the streets, maybe find your way through a newspaper. . . . I had never been outside the United States before, and they dropped me in Iran in the middle of a revolution. But that is just the way things work in the newspaper business. It's not a good theoretical way to work. Accurate information is the biggest problem of everything. You are dealing with a lot of people who are thoroughly mendacious, and people who have no concern with the conception of facts or specificity as we know it.

Lippman: . . . I worked hard on Arabic for the better part of a year, I was able to read some newspaper headlines. I learned the words for terror and kidnapping and blood. I had a very unusual Arabic vocabulary, and I learned to essentially do the marketing, and I could get Syrian soldiers to laugh at my Egyptian accent. If nothing else, it allows you to develop a certain low level camaraderie with people like Fedayeen gunners in South Lebanon. . . . I know I was one of those reporters who spent the time before the fall of the Shah going up to North Teheran interviewing the French speaking intellectuals, and the English speaking bankers about what was going on. And as events quickly showed, those were absolutely the wrong people to be talking to. . . . If we had known Persian and had worked at it, and had developed an affinity for the Persian culture, I think we would have been much better off.

Kifner: . . . I know in Iran, virtually everything that was good of my coverage I owe almost entirely to my interpreters, but it is still not the same as being able to do it yourself.

Krimsky: . . . Maybe the language issue is over-exaggerated, because I know all these people have excellent staff who speak the language. . . .

Lippman (regarding access): . . . There are probably three people in Syria whom you are authorized to interview, assuming that the Syrians deign to let you in the first place. And in my experience there, some very, very good political and military reporting was done by people in the (U.S.) Embassy, and I was always grateful that they would share it with us. . . . In Israel — I worked there briefly myself — if you want to talk to somebody who's high up in the government, you call them up. You don't need to go through the embassy. I assure you that you don't do that in Iraq, and you don't do it in a lot of other places.

Cheatham (regarding claims that TV cameras inflame some situations): . . . I do know (that) every American network's policy is against actions like that and I do trust the integrity of our people involved, the CBS and ABC people. . . . What I can say in a broader context is that Arab students, children, demonstrators, have been shot at, wounded, some killed, without television cameras present.

Alter (regarding access): . . . In Israel, the foreign press is treated very differently from the local press, and it's not a matter of language. Even if you do have the language you just are not invited to the briefings given by the military officials when he talks to military correspondents of the local Hebrew press. But of course that information eventually gets to you from various means, including if you happen to be a good colleague of one of these journalists who has been at the briefings.

Crepeau (regarding differences between American and European journalism): . . . Well, I think that European journalism does tend to be a bit different. I think sometimes they (Europeans) tend to be more engaged than we are — more politically engaged, and to have more of a line to try to detect more nuance and write long, long essays, looking at every aspect of this problem, which frankly I doubt there is that much market for in the American press. I think, personally, the American press probably tries to do as fair and balanced a job as anything I have seen. . . .

EAT AND DRINK
WITH
YOUR FRIENDS
AT THE CLUB

Kifner (regarding censorship): ... In the Arab world, at least to say in Lebanon, the only censor essentially is your own nerve. We were free to do anything we felt we could get away with. There is not a formal process, and we got away with most things, and most people took an awful lot of risks. ...

Crepeau: ... Well, we've tried to put these (censorship) tags on. I think the *Times* has been very consistent, too. We have had to do that on the Falkland Islands copy, coming from British correspondents, "subject to military censorship." We have no way of knowing what might or might not have been censored. Israeli censorship works in sometimes mysterious ways, but basically they are interested in military things. I think any censorship can be capricious, and we in Israel have spent hours literally arguing with some censor over there about some phrasing about whether we can say whether they crossed the Litani river. I have never found out why we could not say "they crossed the Litani river", since we knew they were north of the Litani river, unless there is some tunneling device, I don't know. It's not all that important a problem in Israel, I don't think it probably affects 10 percent of our news. The Israelis, in fact, make all correspondents sign a pledge when you get your press card that you will abide by certain rules and regulations, one of which is censorship.

Cheatham: ... I worked in Israel both in print and television. In print of course the censor is interested in your words. In television he is interested in your pictures. ... In a sense, their emphasis is on the picture, so much so that sometimes our words get by. A sentence that Alan would have written and been censored from the UPI will breeze right through for NBC because that censor is too worried about what picture is showing.

Question: Problem of Censorship — What is the responsibility of a journalist to his own country, to his editor and to himself?

Lippman: ... As for the responsibility of the journalist to the country in which he is posted, your only responsibility is to abide by whatever rules you agreed to abide by in setting up your residence there, and not abusing their hospitality. You have no responsibility for their political future, their economic well being, or the outcome of their wars. That's their problem, not yours. You are only there to report on them. As for your responsibility to this country, that is a loaded question and I think we could go on for years about that. What was the responsibility to this country of the reporters who were writing about the bombing of Cambodia, inflaming public opinion against it in this country? Your responsibility to your editor and yourself is to do the best you can. ...

Kifner: ... Ultimately, your only responsibility is to your reader.

Question: In the last ten years there have been numerous charges that the American press has turned anti-Israel. How do you respond to the question of objectivity reporting and what is the trend in your opinion of foreign reporting from the Middle East?

Crepeau: ... Israel is extremely sensitive about this question, what's called the erosion of support in America for Israel.

Sometimes it even seems they are hysterical about this question. I don't know if there has been any long term trend. ... They would like a journalist to be some sort of window, looking at a panoramic view that coincided with theirs, whereas I see a journalist job more as a lens focusing on some aspect of something to bring it into clarity for a reader. ... We try to report what's happening, and I don't see that we can do other than that.

Cheatham: ... In closed countries, things don't get reported. Sorry, but that's a fact of life.

Lippman (regarding official intimidation): ... I have never been threatened in so many words. You use a certain amount of discretion. I have, for example, asked that stories I wrote from Syria either be kept out of the *International Herald Tribune*, or be printed without my byline. ... That's just a matter of discretion. ... You do two weeks in Saudi Arabia, when you come out, don't do royal family peccadillos, or you won't go back. ... I certainly don't know of a story by anyone in my experience that was just plain suppressed, withheld, or kept from publication, because of fears about access or fears for the correspondent's personal safety.

Kifner: ... I, myself, have had stories from Syria run under very distant datelines, and I think all of us in Beirut has Syria as the main problem. This doesn't mean that we have not covered the stories; we have, but you very often exercise a relative judgment in what you are going to write, when the risk of a story is right to run it. When it's on the news, and when you want to be able to go back to a country.

Sometimes in some of these countries, it is a balancing act. You have to figure out what your long term interests are.

Dale Morsch Dies

Dale D. Morsch, 50, only foreigner ever elected to the board of directors of the Press Club of India, was found dead in his residence in New Delhi July 19. Morsch, who apparently died of natural causes, was UPI's manager for West Asia including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. Morsch spoke Hindi and was on his second assignment in the sub-continent. He also worked for UPI in Hong Kong, Tokyo, Toronto, Montreal and New York. Single, he is survived by three sisters in Kansas, where he was born.

— Al Kaff

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McGraw-Hill Publications Company based in New York City announces three staff openings in chemical-industry management:

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Who, What, Where

By Rosalind Massow

TOWN HISTORIAN . . . It seems fitting that **Henry Cassidy**, OPC vice president, be named town historian for the village of East Fishkill, N.Y., in the heart of FDR country. Cassidy was AP bureau chief in Moscow during the war years, but he was very much a part of the Roosevelt era. He knew the Roosevelts personally, covered their emissaries and collected colorful anecdotes about their social and political life. Now in retirement, he's become an authoritative commentator on the Roosevelt years. Recently he was called upon to analyze the historical implications of the changes FDR brought about in the news media and, this being the 100th year celebration of FDR's birth, more speeches are inevitable.

COOL TALES FROM ICELAND . . . Founder member **Irene Corbally Kuhn**, jut back from a tour of Iceland, will report about it over the Satellite Program network on Aug. 4. Irene's adventures include a 475-mile drive along Iceland's spectacular southern coast and a day on the only inhabited island in the Westman group.

HAS CONTRACT. NEEDS CONTACTS . . . **Julia Edwards** signed with Dial Press for a book about women foreign correspondents. Now she requires additional input from lady journalists who cover the globe. Any interesting anecdotes, remembrances, etc. about lady journalists overseas would be appreciated. Julia will be in New York after Aug. 1, contact the club.

INSIDE RESORTS . . . In their 10 years with Fieldings Guide to the Caribbean, the **Harmans, Jeanne** and **Harry**, established a reputation for telling it like it is. Now with the same incisive style, they are reporting on prestigious resorts in a series of guides called Quality of Life books. Slanted to travelers and people looking to relocate, these indepth studies of upscale destinations are sold only through the publisher, Seaview Books, Inc., St. Simons Island, Ga., 31522, or the Harmans, 3205 Country Club Rd., Valdosta, Ga. 31601. Postpaid cost is \$4.95. Latest guide is St. Simons Island/Sea Island Report, previous titles included Hilton Head, San Juan Islands (Pacific West Coast), and the U.S. Virgins.

EMINENTLY QUALIFIED . . . In his 90th year, **Edward L. Bernays** is still active and effective. He's been named honorary chairman of Boston's Careers for Later Years, Inc., a new non-profit organization to help provide more career options for 60, 70 and 80-year olds.

IN THE WINGS . . . **Charlotte Klein** has been named President-Elect of the N.Y. Chapter, Public Relations Society of America. Recently as Chair of group's a-

wards committee she presented former N.Y. *Daily News* editor Michael J. O'Neill with the Walter Carty Award for Outstanding Public Service Journalism.

SPEAKS UP FOR TRAVEL WRITING . . . Hunting and fishing reporters can also be effective travel writers, thus spake **Peter J. Celliers** at the annual convention of the Outdoor Writers Association of America meeting in Spokane, Wash.

NOW IN MODERN GREEK . . . **Christopher G. Janus** reports from his home in Delaware that his book "Only For Your Eyes" will be published this fall in Greek.

TULSA BOOSTER . . . As corporate communication specialist for the Oklahoma Natural Gas Co., **Stafford G. Davis** has a faculty for getting foreign representatives out to Tulsa to study the area's sound economy. Latest visitors were John G.B. Watson, Conservative member of Parliament, and Eoin D.C. O'Sullivan, North American director of the Ireland Industrial Authority.

ARTICLES . . . Both the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Hackensack Record* recently ran stories on Thailand written by **Grant Burden**, with an assist from wife Marian.

CHINA (Continued from page 1)

Commerce, organized last fall, have experienced the same problem.

Members also voted to establish a committee to deal with the troublesome problem of "bi-lateralism." Coverage of any distinguished foreign visitor to China is almost always limited strictly to the newsmen representing the media of the foreigner's homeland, even though the visitor's meetings with Chinese leaders might be of global importance. Embassies here claim that the Chinese government insists on such "bi-lateral" treatment, but most journalists agree that diplomats are unwilling to press the Chinese officials into

allowing wider coverage.

The U.S. Embassy is regularly singled out for criticism because of the importance of any major U.S. figure who visits China. Only American and Chinese newsmen were allowed into meetings with Chinese leaders and recent American guests, Vice-President George Bush and Senate majority leader Howard Baker. Non-American and non-Chinese journalists saw these men only at their departure press conferences.

Alicia Patterson Grants Available

Washington, D.C.— Helen McMaster Coulson, executive director of The Alicia Patterson Foundation, has announced the 18th annual competition for the Foundation's fellowship for journalists. Applications will be accepted from U.S. citizens who are print journalists with at least five years of professional experience. October 1 is the filing deadline.

Established in 1965 in memory of Alicia Patterson who was editor and publisher of Long Island's *Newsday* for over twenty years, one year grants are awarded to working newsmen to pursue independent projects. Their written findings will be published, in the *APF Reporter*, a quarterly published by the Foundation. Last year's winners submitted the following papers: "The Neutralization of Europe," "Aspects of Organized Crime," "CHIPS: The American Semiconductor Industry," "The U.S. Economy Since World War II" and "Social Change in U.S. and Central America."

Journalists interested in the competition are requested to contact Ms. Coulson at the Foundation's headquarters, 1629 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

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